

# **Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – Organic Transitions (ORG)**

---

## **2011 Request for Applications**

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 30, 2011**



**U.S. Department of Agriculture  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture**

# **NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

## **ORGANIC TRANSITIONS**

### **INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

**CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE:** This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.303.

**DATES:** Applications must be received by close of business (COB) (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time) on **June 30, 2011**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

**STAKEHOLDER INPUT:** The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Oversight Division; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: [RFP-OEP@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:RFP-OEP@nifa.usda.gov). (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Organic Transitions RFA.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** NIFA announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – Organic Transitions Program (ORG) for fiscal year (FY) 2011 to solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems through the integration of research, education, and extension activities in program areas. In FY 2011, approximately \$3.75 million is available to support the ORG program. It is anticipated that five to seven awards will be made in FY 2011.

This notice identifies the objectives for ORG projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an ORG grant. NIFA additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

## Table of Contents

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION .....	4
A. Legislative Authority and Background .....	4
B. Purpose and Priorities .....	6
C. Program Area Description.....	6
PART II—AWARD INFORMATION.....	10
A. Available Funding.....	10
B. Types of Applications .....	10
C. Project Types .....	10
PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION.....	12
A. Eligible Applicants.....	12
B. Hispanic-serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities.....	12
C. Cost Sharing or Matching. ....	13
PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION .....	14
A. Electronic Application Package .....	14
B. Content and Form of Application Submission .....	15
C. Submission Dates and Times .....	19
D. Funding Restrictions .....	19
E. Other Submission Requirements .....	20
PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS .....	21
A. General.....	21
B. Evaluation Criteria .....	21
C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality .....	22
D. Organizational Management Information .....	22
PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION .....	23
A. General.....	23
B. Award Notice .....	23
C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....	24
D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements .....	25
PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT .....	26
PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION .....	27
A. Access to Review Information .....	27
B. Use of Funds; Changes.....	27
C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards.....	28
D. Regulatory Information.....	28
E. Definitions.....	28

## **PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION**

### **A. Legislative Authority and Background**

Section 406 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA) (7 U.S.C. 7626), as reauthorized by Section 7306 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA) (Pub. L. 110-246), authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a competitive grants program that provides funding for integrated, multifunctional agricultural research, extension, and education activities. Subject to the availability of appropriations to carry out this program, the Secretary may award grants to colleges and universities [as defined by section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) (7 U.S.C. 3103)], as amended, on a competitive basis for projects that address priorities in United States agriculture and involve integrated research, education, and extension activities, as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board (NAREEEAB). The RFA will be developed each fiscal year based on these established priorities and approaches to solving the critical agricultural issues. Section 7129 of the FCEA amended section 406(b) of AREERA (7 U.S.C. 7626(b)), adding Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities (HSACUs) as eligible entities for competitive funds awarded under this authority (see Part III, B. for more information).

The overall goal of the ORG Program is to support the development and implementation of research, extension and higher education programs to improve the competitiveness of organic livestock and crop producers, as well as those who are adopting organic practices. NIFA administers the ORG by determining priorities in U.S. agriculture through Agency stakeholder input processes in consultation with the NAREEEAB. After passage of the 2002 Farm Bill created the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), NAREEEAB recommended that the ORG authority be used in conjunction with the funding authority for OREI to form the Integrated Organic Program (IOP). In FY 2009, the legislatively defined goal of determining the impacts of organic farming on water, air and soil quality was added to OREI. In FY 2009, to implement the water quality component of this goal, IOP/ORG funding was used in conjunction with funding devoted to the National Integrated Water Quality Program to create the Integrated Organic and Water Quality Program (IOWP). In FY 2010, to implement the soil quality component of this goal, IOP/ORG prioritized environmental services provided by organic farming systems that support soil conservation and contribute to climate change mitigation. In 2011, IOP/ORG will continue to prioritize environmental services provided by organic farming systems in the area of soil conservation and climate change mitigation. It is expected that all projects will integrate research, education and extension activities, as appropriate to project goals, although some projects may be weighted more heavily than others in one or more of these areas. However, all proposals should have activities and impact in at least two of these three areas: research, education and extension.

The 2009 USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) report “Emerging Issues in the US Organic Industry” ([www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib55/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib55/)) stated that organic agricultural practices provided ecosystem services and environmental benefits including reduced nutrient pollution,

improved soil tilth, increased soil organic matter and productivity and lower energy use. The report also stated that soils in organic farming systems sequester as much carbon as soils under other carbon sequestration strategies and could help reduce carbon levels in the atmosphere. This is because of the extensive use of cover crops, crop rotation, fallowing, and animal and green manures by organic and transitional farmers. Thus, organic and other systems that prioritize soil health and carbon sequestration have great potential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating future climate change impacts. Organic practices reducing emissions or sequestering carbon may be eligible for offset carbon credits in future carbon markets.

As described in a recent report by the Greenhouse Gas Working Group of ASA, CSSA and SSSA ([www.crops.org/files/science-policy/ghg-report-august-2010.pdf](http://www.crops.org/files/science-policy/ghg-report-august-2010.pdf)), nitrous oxide is another important greenhouse gas, but field measurements of GHG emission were generally not available for cropping systems in most regions of the United States. The report concluded that rigorous field validation of modeled data was needed. Applications of nitrogen fertilizers by agriculture contribute to increasing levels of nitrous oxide in the atmosphere. Nitrous oxide emissions from organic cropping systems may be higher than those in conventional systems because of the use of green manures and animal manures. These organic materials can increase denitrification rates compared to synthetic fertilizers. On the other hand, to the extent that soil nitrate levels are lower in organic systems, then nitrous oxide emissions could be less than in conventional systems. For example, leguminous green manures capture nitrogen from the atmosphere, making it available to plants, and reducing the need for nitrogen fertilizer application. In addition, winter cover crops can capture excess nitrogen. Types of organic fertilizers applied and specific tillage and pest management practices may also affect nitrous oxide emissions, making it difficult to predict or reduce fluxes in specific organic cropping systems. A better understanding of these processes in organic systems is necessary in order to develop management practices that minimize emissions without decreasing yield potential. It may also be relevant to consider economic, behavioral, cultural, or policy barriers to adoption of best management practices.

Research and extension efforts in soil conservation and climate change mitigation will increase the competitiveness of organic and transitioning farmers by providing measurement tools and documentation methods to support both current payments for organic practices that are cross-compliant with Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) practice standards, and potential future payments for carbon credits that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester carbon and mitigate climate change impacts. Payments to growers for environmental services would be particularly valuable to transitioning organic farmers, since during the transition period from conventional to organic practices, market premiums are not yet available, while input and management costs may be higher and yields may be lower.

In addition, research, education and extension activities in this area can guide organic growers in selecting practices that optimize soil quality and support other conservation outcomes, as well as mitigate the effects of climate change. Documenting current contributions of organic agriculture in the area of environmental services and climate change mitigation, and providing extension and educational resources in this area, will increase the competitiveness of organic farmers by providing research-based data on which to base current and potential future incentives for growers who use or transition to organic practices.

## **B. Purpose and Priorities**

In FY 2011, the Organic Transitions Program (ORG) will explore the changes in soil quality indicators, conservation outcomes, climate change mitigation potential and other environmental services associated with certified organic farming practices and systems. USDA defines organic agriculture as an ecological production system, established “to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity” (USDA National Organic Program <http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=4fcd87dcf07e88e72385a2c486514202&rgn=div8&view=text&node=7:3.1.1.9.3.2.3.354.1&idno=7>). Section 205.200 of these regulations mandates protection of natural resources. Organic producers are required to use practices that maintain or improve the physical, chemical and biological condition of soil and minimize soil erosion. Many of these practices are also cross-compliant with NRCS practice standards. However, for individual growers, implementing a range of practices, such as use of cover crops, organic plant and animal composts and manures, rotation, and reduced tillage, there are few tools and limited research data available to guide them in the selection of practices to optimize the conservation, climate change or soil quality benefits of their farming system. Metrics and models relevant to organic systems are also limited, making it difficult to quantify these environmental services, qualify for current cost-share programs or potential carbon credit programs, or even predict the optimal practices and practice combinations for a particular farming situation.

Integrated research, education, and extension projects (up to \$300,000 per year) are solicited for this program. Projects may be one to three years in duration, but the total amount to be awarded is not to exceed \$750,000. NIFA expects to make a total of five to seven awards.

Practices and systems to be addressed include those associated with organic crops, organic animal production (including dairy), and organic systems integrating plant and animal production. Applicants are expected to describe stakeholder involvement in problem identification, planning, implementation and evaluation. Applications describing multi-state, multi-institutional, multidisciplinary, multifunctional activities and combinations thereof are encouraged. However, a single university demonstrating significant collaboration with various agencies or organizations within the host state, as appropriate to project goals, may also be competitive. Applicants are strongly encouraged to assemble project teams that include those with expertise in research, education, extension, and evaluation. Projects should plan to deliver applied production information to producers and/or students. Applicants are also encouraged to describe how results at the field and farm scale might be extrapolated beyond the boundaries of the proposed project.

## **C. Program Area Description**

Organic agricultural systems and practices provide many environmental services, and environmental stewardship is a key principle in organic farming. For example, the use of cover crops, crop rotation, and erosion control, proper manure management, and livestock operation

guidelines are cross-compliant with many NRCS practice standards. However the contributions to conservation outcomes and climate change mitigation potential of specific practices, combinations of practices, and their interactions in organic systems are not well understood or well documented, especially in the case of long-term organic soil management. The most meaningful metrics or models to quantify these services in organic systems are also not clear. A better understanding and documentation of these outcomes will allow organic practices to be adjusted to optimize environmental services and to quantify and document environmental services in the areas of conservation practices and climate change mitigation. This information will help farmers better assess the financial benefits and costs of their practices and improve the ability of farmers to qualify for current and future incentives. Quantifying the environmental service impact of organic farming practices and systems will also help justify consumer expectations that organically grown and certified food is produced using the most environmentally sound and sustainable production practices possible.

In this RFA we are soliciting proposals assessing the impact of organic systems on environmental outcomes in the areas of soil conservation, land stewardship, soil carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emissions (CO<sub>2</sub> or N<sub>2</sub>O). Fieldwork to set up treatments or collect data on organic practices must be done on certified organic land. Refer to the USDA National Organic Program ([www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop](http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop)) for organic production standards. However, as appropriate to project objectives, comparisons can include land in transition to organic certification and land not managed using organic practices.

We expect projects to use field and modeling information to demonstrate the benefits or challenges to environmental services and climate change mitigation posed by implementing certified organic practices and/or combinations of practices. Projects should use combinations of research, education, and extension activities and describe expected outcomes and impacts in terms of changes in knowledge, changes in behaviors, and/or changes in environmental services in the area of soil quality, soil conservation and/or greenhouse gas emissions. All projects are also expected to develop and implement an evaluation plan that captures project outcomes and demonstrates the impact of the project through measured improvements in soil resources, soil conservation, carbon sequestration or greenhouse gas mitigation. The evaluation section should describe how the project evaluator or evaluation team will determine the accomplishment of project goals and project impact. Evaluation should be based on benchmarks, indicators, or expected outcomes related to project goals and activities such that project goals are related to activities and to outputs, outcomes and impact (immediate, short-term, and intermediate-term expected changes). Most evaluations are based on questions that relate to program and project goals. The budget must include adequate resources for project evaluation.

Project Directors are required to attend at least one PD workshop during the course of their project. These workshops may be held in conjunction with another conference or may be held apart from any other meeting. For the purposes of budget development, applicants are required to include in the budget narrative section of the application a request for funds adequate to attend at least one PD workshop in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, preferably in the final year of the project.



**Priority Areas:** To document, quantify and develop better tools to measure the environmental services provided by organic systems and practices. It would be particularly valuable to address cross-compliance issues with NRCS Practice Standards and Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) organic systems programs. To guide organic growers in selecting optimal organic systems and practices, we are interested in determining the resource conservation outcomes of investments in organic and transitional operations, such as erosion control and carbon sequestration. A related priority is to develop better tools and metrics for assessing the contribution of organic practices and systems in both current cost share programs, and potential future payment systems for greenhouse gas emission reduction and other climate change mitigation credit systems. Stakeholders should be involved in the development of these projects. As appropriate to project goals, extension and educational efforts should ensure that research results are communicated and overall project impact assessed.

**Priority 1:** Documenting and understanding the effects of organic practices such as crop rotation, organic manure, mulch and/or compost additions, cover crops, and reduced or conservation tillage on soil quality, soil erosion, soil carbon sequestration and/or greenhouse gas emissions. Project examples include: 1) comparing the results of organic practices and/or their interactions on erosion in organic systems using both field measurements and erosion predictor models; 2) optimizing tillage and rotation practices to reduce erosion and increase carbon sequestration during the transition to organic agricultural systems and practices; 3) examining soil dynamics in fields under long-term organic soil management and 4) generating data sets on nitrous oxide emissions from organic systems utilizing different sources of nitrogen, rotation practices and tillage levels. An example of an animal-based organic system project in this priority area is assessing the environmental, conservation, greenhouse gas emission reduction, and/or climate change mitigation potential of pasture-based organic dairy systems.

**Priority 2:** Improved technologies, methods, model development and other metrics to document, describe, and optimize the environmental services and climate change mitigation ability of organic farming systems. Project examples include: 1) comparing current models with field data; 2) developing tools that could be used to select an optimal suite of organic practices for a particular farming system; 3) developing better tools for assessing contributions of organic practices in future carbon markets; and 4) validating estimates of conservation outcomes, environmental services, soil carbon sequestration potential and/or greenhouse gas mitigation determined by current models using areas under long-term organic management.

ORG encourages projects that develop content suitable for delivery through eXtension. Funding may be requested to:

- 1) Establish an eXtension Community of Practice (CoP) or
- 2) Enhance an existing CoP, such as eOrganic, to ensure that information and technology transfer reaches potential adopters as quickly as possible.

Applicants establishing new CoPs (or enhancing existing ones) must follow the steps outlined by eXtension.org (<http://create.extension.org/node/2057>). Proposals to establish a new CoP should



address in their narrative the key criteria to establish a new Community of Practice, as described on the above eXtension web site.

**Please see the following links for more information:**

**eXtension Home Page:** <http://about.extension.org/>

**eXtension NIFA RFA Information:** <http://create.extension.org/node/2057>

**eOrganic Home page:** [eOrganic.info/](http://eOrganic.info/) and [www.extension.org/organic\\_production](http://www.extension.org/organic_production).

**Greenhouse Gas Working Group. 2010.** Agriculture's role in greenhouse gas emissions and capture. Greenhouse Gas Working Group Rep. ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, Madison, WI  
[www.agronomy.org/files/science-policy/ghg-report-august-2010.pdf](http://www.agronomy.org/files/science-policy/ghg-report-august-2010.pdf)

**Background on the organic industry:** Catherine Greene, Carolyn Dimitri, Biing-Hwan Lin, William McBride, Lydia Oberholtzer, and Travis Smith. Emerging Issues in the U.S. Organic Industry. EIB-55. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, June 2009  
[www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib55/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib55/).

## **PART II—AWARD INFORMATION**

### **A. Available Funding**

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. Approximately \$3.75 million is available to fund ORG grants in FY 2011.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see [www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method\\_of\\_payment.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html).

### **B. Types of Applications**

In FY 2011, applications may be submitted to the ORG as one of the following two types of requests:

(1) **New application.** This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the ORG. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

(2) **Resubmitted application.** This is an application that had previously been submitted to the ORG but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary in the Project Narrative. Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates. They will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in the area to which they are assigned according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

All ORG grants will be made as standard awards with a project period of one to three years. A standard award is an award instrument by which the Department of Agriculture agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined project period without the announced intention of providing additional support at a future date.

### **C. Project Types**

ORG will fund standard Integrated Research, Education, and Extension projects with a project period of one to three years. Budgets may not exceed \$300,000 per year with the total amount awarded not to exceed \$750,000. A total of five to seven awards are anticipated.

An Integrated Project includes at least two of the three functions of the agricultural knowledge system (research, extension and education) within a project, focused around a problem or issue. The functions addressed in the project should be interwoven throughout the life of the project and act to complement and reinforce one another. The functions should be interdependent and necessary for the success of the project. Integrated Projects aim to resolve problems through the application of science-based knowledge and address needs identified by stakeholders. Integrated Projects clearly identify anticipated outcomes and have a plan for evaluating and documenting

the success of the project.

## **PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Colleges and universities (as defined in section 1404 of NARETPA) (7 U.S.C. 3103) are eligible to submit applications to the ORG program. Section 1404 of NARETPA was amended by section 7101 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-246) to define Hispanic-serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HSACUs) (see Part III, B. and 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions (<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=7d42a23de2124c2eead6f432974abc7d&rgn=div5&view=text&node=7:15.1.11.2.13&idno=7>) for more information), and to include research foundations maintained by eligible colleges or universities.

For the purposes of this program, the terms “college” and “university” mean an educational institution in any state which (1) admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate; (2) is legally authorized within such state to provide a program of education beyond secondary education; (3) provides an educational program for which a bachelor’s degree or any other higher degree is awarded; (4) is a public or other nonprofit institution; and (5) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association. Applications also may be submitted by 1994 Land-Grant Institutions (defined in 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions (<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=7d42a23de2124c2eead6f432974abc7d&rgn=div5&view=text&node=7:15.1.11.2.13&idno=7>), HSACUs, and research foundations maintained by eligible colleges or universities.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. An applicant’s failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline will preclude NIFA from reviewing an application and making an award.

### **B. Hispanic-serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities**

Section 7101 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Pub. L. 110-246) amended section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) (7 USC 3103) to create a definition for a new group of cooperating institutions: Hispanic-serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HSACUs). HSACUs are colleges and universities that qualify as Hispanic-serving Institutions (HSIs) and offer associate, bachelors, or other accredited degree programs in agriculture-related fields. HSACUs do not include 1862 land-grant institutions.

Pursuant to section 406 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA) (7 U.S.C. 7626) which authorized the Integrated Research, Education, and

Extension Competitive Grant Program, all four year HSIs are eligible to apply for Integrated Projects as identified in the FY 2011 ORG RFA. Two year HSIs, however, may be eligible to apply only upon a determination by NIFA that the institution offers an associate or other accredited degree programs in agriculture-related fields. To seek an eligibility determination for grants under this RFA, two year HSIs may submit a one-page request to NIFA certifying that they are a Hispanic-serving institution, as defined in section 502 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1101a), and providing a justification that they do offer associate or other accredited degree programs in agriculture-related fields. Eligibility determinations are valid for FY 2011 only and must be renewed every fiscal year.

Additional questions on HSACU eligibility can be addressed to Dr. Irma Lawrence, HSI National Program Leader, at [ilawrence@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:ilawrence@nifa.usda.gov), (202) 720-2082, or via fax (202) 720-3398. HSIs that seek a determination of eligibility may submit a request before the application deadline date to Dr. Lawrence directly or as a portable document format (PDF) attachment to the SF-424 (R&R) application package submitted through Grants.gov. The request should document that the HSI: 1) qualifies as a Hispanic-serving institution; 2) offers accredited degree programs in agriculture-related fields; and 3) is not an 1862 Land-Grant institution.

### **C. Cost Sharing or Matching**

If a grant provides a particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, the grant recipient is required to provide funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and/or in-kind contributions. See Part IV, B. – R&R Budget for further details.

NIFA may waive the matching funds requirement for a grant if NIFA determines that:

(a) the results of the project, while of particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, are likely to be applicable to agricultural commodities generally; or (b) the project involves a minor commodity, the project deals with scientifically important research, and the grant recipient is unable to satisfy the matching funds requirement.

## PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. **Applicants are advised to submit early to the Grants.gov system.**

#### New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR)(also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If the organization is not prepared (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed PRIOR to submitting an application. It can take as much as two weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations the AR should go to “Get Registered” on the Grants.gov left navigation bar (or go to [www.grants.gov/applicants/get\\_registered.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp)) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov. A quick reference guide listing the steps is available as a 4-page PDF document at the following website: [www.grants.gov/section910/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf](http://www.grants.gov/section910/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf).

#### Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov. This software is essential to apply for NIFA Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see [www.grants.gov/help/download\\_software.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp). To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.gov Adobe Versioning Test Package: [www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp).
2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov. Go to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), click on “Apply for Grants” in the left-hand column, click on “**Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions,**” enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-ICGP-003448** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

**If assistance is needed to access the application package** (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms), **or submitting the application** then refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first ([www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

Grants.gov customer support

Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [Federal Holidays](#).

Email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

See [www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html) for additional resources for applying electronically.

## **B. Content and Form of Application Submission**

Electronic applications should be prepared following Parts V and VI of the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. **ANY PROPOSALS CONTAINING NON-PDF DOCUMENTS WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW.** Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. With documented prior approval, resubmitted applications will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to “Convert Documents to PDF” on <http://grants.gov/assets/PDFConversion.pdf>.

**For any questions related to the preparation of an application** please review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable request for applications. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: [electronic@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:electronic@nifa.usda.gov)
- Phone: 202-401-5048
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time, excluding Federal holidays.

### **1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.



## **2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

## **3. R&R Other Project Information Form**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of ORG.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative **shall not exceed 20 pages** of written text, figures, and tables regardless of whether it is single or double spaced. This maximum (20 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

**(a) Introduction:** Include a clear statement of the long-term goals and supporting objectives of the proposed activities. Summarize the body of knowledge or past activities which substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed activity, including the work of key project personnel. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed project. In addition, include in-depth information on the following, when applicable:

(1) Estimates of the magnitude of the issues and their relevance to stakeholders and to ongoing State-Federal food and agricultural research, education, and extension programs;

(2) Description of the role stakeholders, including end users, play in problem identification, planning, and implementation and evaluation as appropriate; and

(3) Reasons for performing the work at the proposing institution.

**(b) Objectives:** Include clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged statements of specific aims of the proposed effort, including the suitability of scale and transferability of project results or developed materials beyond the project scale. Projects must include specific objectives for each function: research, education, and extension (as appropriate); include evidence of necessary involvement from interdisciplinary teams; and demonstrate the extent to which partnerships with other institutions (Federal, State, other) are developed.

**(c) Methods:** Explicitly state the procedures or methods to be applied to the proposed effort. Include, but do not necessarily limit to:

(1) Description of how stakeholder involvement will be solicited and utilized in the project;

- (2) Description of the proposed project activities in the sequence in which they are to be carried out;
- (3) Techniques and methodology to be employed, including their feasibility and rationale for their use in this project;
- (4) Kinds of results expected within a reasonable time frame;
- (5) Means by which research, extension and education activities will be monitored and evaluated (as appropriate);
- (6) Means by which data will be analyzed and interpreted;
- (7) Details of plans to communicate results to stakeholders and the public;
- (8) Pitfalls that might be encountered; and
- (9) Limitations to proposed procedures.
- (10) Suitability of scale and transferability of project results or developed materials beyond the project scale.

**(d) Project Timetable:** Outline all important phases as a function of time, year by year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period. Include specific, measurable goals or projected accomplishments for each year of ORG funding.

#### **4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

#### **5. R&R Personal Data**

As noted in Part V, 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award.

#### **6. R&R Budget**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

**Matching.** If an applicant concludes that matching funds are not required as specified under Part III, C., a justification should be included in the Budget Narrative. NIFA will consider this justification when ascertaining final matching requirements or determining if required matching can be waived. NIFA retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements.

The sources and the amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution should be summarized on a separate page and placed in the application immediately following the Budget Narrative. All pledge agreements must be placed in the application immediately following the summary of matching support.

For those grants where matching funds are required as specified under Part III, C., applications should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Written verification means:

For any **third party cash contributions**, a separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation; and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

For any **third party in-kind contributions**, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in-kind contribution; and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circular A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions, for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

**Additional Budget Information.** ORG applicants are required to request funds to attend a PD workshop in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, preferably during the final year of the project. The request for these funds should be clearly indicated in the Budget Justification (Field K. of the R&R Budget). Publication costs may include the additional cost of open-source publication if that is an option for the journal. Open source availability will increase the visibility and citation rate for NIFA-funded research publications and should be chosen if it is an option.

## **7. Supplemental Information Form**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

- a. Field 2. Program Code. Enter the program code name “**Organic Transitions Program**” and the program code “**112.E**”.

### C. Submission Dates and Times

**Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.**

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time) on **June 30, 2011**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

**Applicants who have problems with the submission of an application to Grants.gov are encouraged to FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A. for Grants.gov contact information.**

Correspondence regarding submitted applications will be sent using e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 30 days of the established deadline, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in (for competitive programs) the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel or (for non-competitive programs) a delay in the issuance of an award. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

### D. Funding Restrictions

Funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

Section 7132 of FCEA amended NARETPA [7 U.S.C. 3310(a)] to limit indirect costs to 22 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 22 percent of total Federal funds awarded. If no rate has been established the applicant may indicate "None—will negotiate" and a reasonable dollar amount for indirect costs may be requested, which will be subject to approval by USDA. In the latter case, if a proposal is recommended for funding, an indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted prior to award to support the amount of indirect costs requested. NIFA will request an indirect cost rate proposal and provide instructions, as necessary. An applicant may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "None requested" should be written in this space.

## **E. Other Submission Requirements**

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.”

Described below are the requirements for successful submission of an application. All of the following steps must be met for an application to be considered for peer review:

- 1) Meeting the deadline: To electronically send the application to Grants.gov the submit button is hit, which triggers a date and time stamp on the application. The date and time stamp is used to determine whether the application was received by Grants.gov before the deadline, which is prior to close of business (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time) on **June 30, 2011**. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late. Consideration of late applications is only given in extenuating circumstances (e.g., natural disasters, confirmed Grants.gov outage) with proper documentation and support of the Agency Contact (see Part VII). The occurrence of one of these situations does not automatically ensure that a late application will be accepted. If an applicant wants a late application considered under an extenuating circumstance, the applicant should contact the Agency Contact accordingly.
- 2) Successful Grants.gov validation: The Grants.gov system performs a limited check of the application, and applicants are notified by Grants.gov of the outcome of the initial review. Applications meeting Grants.gov requirements are made available to the funding agency for further processing. Applications that fail Grants.gov validation may be resubmitted to Grants.gov if the original agency deadline has not passed. (Note that the Grants.gov system may allow applications to be submitted after the deadline has passed, but the application is considered late by NIFA.)
- 3) Successful Agency validation: NIFA staff performs precursory review of the application. The agency validation process includes, for example, meeting eligibility requirements and following agency application guidelines (e.g., formatting, page limitations, and limits on budget requests). Applicants are notified by NIFA of the outcome of this review.

## **PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. General**

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

### **B. Evaluation Criteria**

Practices and systems to be addressed include those associated with organic crops, organic animal production (including dairy), and organic systems integrating plant and animal production. Applicants are expected to describe stakeholder involvement in problem identification, planning, implementation and evaluation. Applications describing multi-state, multi-institutional, multidisciplinary, multifunctional activities and combinations thereof, will be given priority. However, a single university demonstrating significant collaboration with various agencies or organizations within the host state, as appropriate to project goals, may also be competitive. Applicants are strongly encouraged to assemble project teams that include those with expertise in research, education, extension, and evaluation. Projects should plan to deliver applied production information to producers and students. Applicants are also encouraged to describe how results at the field and farm scale can be extrapolated beyond the parameters of the proposed project.

The evaluation criteria below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA:

#### **1. Technical merit of all aspects of the application, including research, education, and extension components, as appropriate (50 points).**

- (a) Degree of integration of research, education, and extension (10 pts);
- (b) Extent to which proposed work addresses identified organic stakeholder needs and environmental/climate change issues of concern (10 pts);

- (c) Suitability and feasibility of methodology for successfully completing work in the allotted time (10 pts);
- (d) Quality of monitoring and evaluation plans (10 pts);
- (e) Qualifications of key project personnel and institutions, including institutional experience and competence in proposed area of work; and adequacy of available support personnel, equipment, and facilities (10 pts);

**2. Relevance of proposed project to ORG purpose (see Part I, B.) (50 points).**

- (a) Justification for environmental or climate change concern (10 pts);
- (b) Evidence of appropriate involvement with interdisciplinary teams and institutional partners (Federal, State, other) (10 pts);
- (c) Extent to which stakeholders, including end users, were or will be involved in problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation (10 pts);
- (d) Probability that the project will be successful, have documentable impact and produce transferable results (10 pts);
- (e) Likelihood that project will fill knowledge gaps that are critical to the development of organic practices and programs that improve the quality of the Nation's soil resources, offer environmental services and mitigate against climate change (10 pts).

**C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality**

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: [www.hepinc.com](http://www.hepinc.com).

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

**D. Organizational Management Information**

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis, as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. NIFA will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).



## **PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. General**

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of NIFA shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of NIFA as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

### **B. Award Notice**

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to which the Director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PD's chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Director during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see [www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html) to view NIFA award terms and conditions);

(10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

### **C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122 (2 CFR Parts 220 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR Part 3021—Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance).

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—CSREES procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

#### **D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements**

PDs are required to attend at least one PD workshop at a location and time to be designated at a later date, preferably in the final year of the project. Budget amount should be sufficient to attend a 2 day workshop in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

Grantees are required to submit annual and summary evaluation reports via NIFA's Current Research Information System (CRIS). CRIS is an electronic, web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. CRIS can be accessed at <http://cris.nifa.usda.gov>.

For informational purposes, the “Federal Financial Report,” Form SF-425, consolidates into a single report the former Financial Status Report (SF-269 and SF-269A) and the Federal Cash Transactions Report (SF-272 and SF-272A). The NIFA Agency-specific Terms and Conditions ([www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html)) include the requirement that Form SF-425 is due on an **annual basis no later than 30 days following the end of each reporting period. A final “Federal Financial Report,” Form SF-425, is due 90 days after the expiration date of this award.**

## **PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT**

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Dr. Mary Peet  
National Program Leader; Division of Plant Systems - Production  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2240  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250-2240;  
Telephone: (202) 401-4202  
Fax: (202) 401-1782  
E-mail: [mpeet@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:mpeet@nifa.usda.gov)

## **PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION**

### **A. Access to Review Information**

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

### **B. Use of Funds; Changes**

#### **1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility**

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

#### **2. Changes in Project Plans**

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended by NIFA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes, if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

### **C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards**

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

### **D. Regulatory Information**

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

### **E. Definitions**

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Federal Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions (<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=7d42a23de2124c2eead6f432974abc7d&rgn=div5&view=text&node=7:15.1.11.2.13&idno=7>) for the applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

For the purpose of this program, the following additional definitions are applicable:

Director means the Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and any other officer or employee of NIFA to whom the authority involved is delegated.

Integrated project means a project incorporating two or three functions of the agricultural knowledge system (research, education, and extension) around a problem or activity.

Multidisciplinary project means a project on which investigators from two or more disciplines collaborate to address a common problem. These collaborations, where appropriate, may integrate the biological, physical, chemical, or social sciences.